

REPORT FROM THE SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE
ON CHANGING ACADEMIC STRUCTURES

INTRODUCTION

On August 17, 2009, President Steven Franklin posted a briefing note on his Renewal of Planning Processes website concerning the Special Advisory Committee on Changing Academic Structures. In that briefing note, he invited members of the Trent University community to consider whether “Trent’s academic structure serves the needs of faculty and students in pursuit of academic goals” and whether “Trent’s academic structure supports the development of goals and objectives, actions and targets, that will lead Trent University to realize a dynamic vision for the future”.

In September President Franklin confirmed the membership of the Special Advisory Committee (see Appendix A) and charged it with delivering to him a report recommending an academic structure that would support the pursuit of academic goals and that would permit the University to pursue its preferred future.

BACKGROUND

Over the last two decades, Trent has grown significantly in numbers of students (graduate and undergraduate), faculty (permanent and contract), staff (permanent and contract), and academic programs (graduate, undergraduate, and professional). For most of this period, Trent has had a Vice President Academic and a single Dean of Arts & Science. While the academic administrative structure at Trent has been modified in smaller and larger ways over the last two decades, usually in response to very immediate and short-term difficulties, its defining characteristic of having a single Faculty of Arts & Science, with a single Dean, and no other Faculties, has not changed.

In its review of academic administrative structures at other Ontario and Canadian universities, the Committee noted how anomalous this structure is. While three other universities in Ontario have a Faculty of Arts & Science (the University of Toronto, Queen’s University, and Nipissing University), none of them has *only* a Faculty of Arts & Science. And none of them has a single academic administrator responsible for all the undergraduate programs in the university, the professional development of all faculty members at the university, or the allocation of all staffing resources to all academic units in the university. The Committee is not aware of any other university in Canada with more than 1,000 students that has a Faculty of Arts & Science and no other Faculty.

As it began its deliberations, the Committee was aware that several senior academic administrators were currently serving in “Acting” capacities, that several portfolios were “Interim” portfolios, and that several reporting lines had been changed on a temporary basis. This assisted the members of the Committee in thinking of the structure in functional terms and not in terms of the occupants (acting or otherwise) of the current positions (interim or otherwise).

The Committee was further aware that several renewal activities, designed to result in a new Vision Statement, a new Mission Statement, and a new Strategic Directions document, were underway across the University. The creation of a College Review Task Force had also been announced. The Committee discussed in what ways the outcomes of these renewal activities might affect its deliberations about preferred structures. After the first round of consultations, members of the Committee attended a retreat hosted by the President on December 15th which included representatives of the Vision Renewal Review Committee and the Strategic Directions Advisory Committee (which encompassed the Mission Statement Working Group). The interrelation of the work of these committees was discussed, and the consensus was that the anticipated outcomes would not likely affect the academic administrative organization of the University. The Committee did think that the outcome of the College Review Task Force might be relevant to determining an optimal reporting structure for administrators of the Colleges.

CONSULTATIONS – PHASE ONE

The Special Advisory Committee held several preliminary meetings and then sent out invitations to approximately 50 departments/programs, committees, executives of unions and student groups, as well as to some more loosely constituted groups. Members of the Committee met with approximately 400 people in meetings of those almost 40 committees/groups (see Appendix B) who responded to the Committee invitation to ask them what they thought about the current single-Faculty structure at Trent; what they thought about moving to a multi-Faculty structure; what reasons they had (if any) for preferring a new model or the *status quo*; and what consequent reorganization at other levels of Trent’s academic structure might follow from a different model.

The Committee heard much useful feedback that, although it did not determine a single model for a revised academic administrative structure, did provide the Committee insight into what needed to be preserved, protected, and/or enhanced in any new structure under consideration. The Committee heard resoundingly that the workload in the Office of the Dean of Arts & Science is much too great. While there were different suggestions as to how this should be addressed, the Committee did not encounter resistance to the idea that change was necessary.

The Committee heard from some that a single Faculty of Arts & Science was what was distinctive about Trent; it heard from others that it was important for the future well-being of their unit that they have more autonomy for their unit and/or more capacity to

plan their own futures; some interpreted this as the need to form separate Faculties. The Committee heard that Nursing and Education thought that their needs would be better served by being stand-alone administrative units outside the Faculty of Arts & Science, but that Business and Forensics did not feel that membership in a School or a Faculty of Professional Programs was essential to their functioning. Business Administration, in particular, saw its placement within the Faculty of Arts & Science as a relative strength of its program.

Interdisciplinarity was cited as very important and something that no changed structure should impede. The Committee noted that there did not seem to be a single sense of what interdisciplinarity is, and it heard that interdisciplinarity arises from grass-roots collaborations rather than from any particular structure. The Committee heard that students should be able to continue to take cross-listed courses, pursue joint majors, and have a general, broad-based first year, and that faculty should continue to be able to be cross-appointed.

The Committee heard from many that there should not be duplication in things like Faculty Council, Faculty Board, COAP, USC, and other committees that serve a pan-University function.

The Committee heard concerns that a new academic administrative structure was likely to impose additional costs at a time when cutbacks are occurring.

INTERIM CONCLUSIONS

The Committee was convinced, based on the first round of consultations and the independent research that it conducted, that change to Trent's academic administrative structure is required if Trent is to be able to support faculty, chairs, departments, students, and staff in the manner in which they should be supported and if Trent is to be able to plan effectively for its preferred future.

The members of the Committee heard that the current structure does not serve departments, chairs, and faculty members as well as it should. Because the Dean of Arts & Science is responsible for all departments, all undergraduate degree offerings, and the professional welfare of all faculty members, he/she cannot provide the kind of support required to permit departments, chairs, and faculty members to flourish and to respond in meaningful ways to changes in the internal and external environments. The Committee identified ways in which the current structure likewise does not serve students as well as it could.

The members of the Committee also heard that Trent has not been very good at strategic planning and strategic decision-making. Several faculty members thought that Trent's strategy had been simply to "follow the money". The Committee concluded that much of Trent's poor history of planning can be attributed to the current structure, which does not permit the Dean of Arts & Science any time to engage in strategic planning and which

grants the Dean of Arts & Science all the instructional resources and the Provost and Vice President Academic none. Because the Dean of Arts & Science is charged with supporting all departments equitably, he/she has little capacity (in good times or bad) to make differential allocations which would reflect agreed-upon strategic priorities at the University. Were the Provost and Vice President Academic permitted some discretion – in consultation with a council of Deans – in the allocation of instructional resources across smaller units of the University, the capacity to direct resources to agreed-upon priority areas over time would be increased.

The members of the Committee heard another concern about the centralization of resource-allocation in a single office. While there was never any suggestion that the current Acting Dean of Arts & Science or any of the past Deans of Arts & Science had done anything other than try to allocate resources equitably, there was a sense that the decisions were not made in a transparent manner. While some faculty valued the maximum flexibility accorded the Dean of Arts & Science through the centralization of decision-making, others thought more transparent and more participatory decision-making would be in the best interests of departments and chairs. Were a Dean to have budgetary responsibility over a smaller number of departments, he/she would be able to institute mechanisms whereby resource allocation and priority-setting within that smaller unit would be the subject of discussion amongst the various departments.

Trent's inability to groom future administrators internally was also seen to be a weakness that is attributable to the current structure. The overwhelmingly large portfolio for the Dean of Arts & Science has made the position relatively unattractive to internal members of the Trent community, and it reflects quite a large step up in terms of responsibility and accountability from departmental chair. Equally, the capacity to groom potential Provost and Vice Presidents Academic and potential Presidents is very limited, given the current structure. Several faculty noted that the oft-repeated desire to appoint senior administrators from within Trent is frustrated by the current academic administrative structure. And in those instances when seeking external candidates is thought to be desirable, the structure serves as a deterrent for many, either because the positions are anomalously labeled (e.g., Director of the School of Nursing reporting to a Dean of Arts & Science, where in most places this position would be a decanal position) or because the positions look intimidatingly large. The members of the Committee were conscious of how Trent's current academic administrative structure is perceived externally.

The members of the Committee heard several times that faculty thought that there was not a good fit between academic priorities and philanthropic priorities. The current Dean of Arts & Science's workload does not permit him/her to play an active role in philanthropic initiatives, and this can be to the detriment of departments and faculty. Were the workload of the Dean of Arts & Science distributed across more portfolios, there would be greater capacity for academic administrators to work more closely with the Office of External Relations and Advancement and to ensure an alignment of academic priorities and philanthropic priorities.

The members of the Committee also heard that there was a desire to have decanal

portfolios which permit the incumbents the capacity to continue with their teaching and/or their research, albeit in a significantly reduced fashion. It was thought both that this would keep Deans more aware of the day-to-day struggles of faculty members and that this might make the positions more attractive to faculty members who wished to serve as academic administrators for a single term and then return to their faculty status.

The Committee concluded that Trent's current academic administrative structure inhibits its administrators from serving faculty, chairs, departments, students, and staff as well as they could and should, and prevents the University from responding effectively to internal and external changes and from planning its preferred future.

CONSULTATIONS – PHASE TWO

After meeting almost a dozen times to synthesize what the members of the Committee had heard and to do some further research on academic administrative structures at other Canadian universities, the Committee developed three models for consideration. It held a workshop on January 20th to which it invited all those members of the Trent University community who had expressed an interest in contributing to the Committee's work through the Renewal of Planning Processes website, and it held consultations – at which it presented three models for consideration, answered questions, and sought feedback – at Faculty Council, Faculty Board, and Senate in early February. In addition, the Committee held three open consultation sessions to which all members of the Trent community were invited in the week of February 8th at which feedback was sought, and the Academic Planning & Budget Committee was asked to provide input at its February 9th meeting. At each of these presentations and consultation sessions, members of the Trent community were invited to provide written feedback to the Chair of the Committee or to any of its members. Almost 20 written submissions were received, many of them noting the importance of ensuring that Trent students are provided with professionally developed and delivered student services, and the need to find a structure that will work for Trent and that will permit all student support services to be well coordinated in order to improve the experience of Trent students both inside and outside the classroom. The possible implications for the TUFA Collective Agreement of the proposed models were discussed at Joint Committee meetings in January and February, and there is a commitment to ongoing discussion about matters that are relevant to the Collective Agreement.

RECOMMENDATION

The Special Advisory Committee on Academic Structures is recommending to President Steven Franklin the model captured in the attached organizational chart.

The Committee is recommending that Trent retain a single Faculty of Arts & Science, but that it have three Deans: a Dean of Science, a Dean of Social Sciences, and a Dean of Humanities. Each of the three Deans will have many of the same responsibilities as the

current Dean of Arts & Science, but for a smaller group of departments and faculty members. These responsibilities include: oversight of departments; support of chairs; management of academic support staff within the division; representation of division needs and strategic initiatives to the Provost and Vice President Academic; the quality of undergraduate degree programs and participation in quality assurance procedures; attention to the recruitment, retention, engagement, and student support activities relevant to students within the division; an instructional budget; the hiring of tenure track faculty subsequent to recommendations from personnel committees; the hiring of LTAs and CUPE instructors subsequent to recommendations from personnel committees; the professional development of faculty and participation in COAP recommendations; the celebration of the achievements of faculty and students; working with ER&A to align philanthropic priorities with academic priorities. Each Dean would be a member of Senate and a member of the Vice President's Academic Advisory Committee. Each Dean would be expected to advocate for the interests and welfare of the division and departments under him/her, but each Dean would also be required to collaborate with the other Deans and to work cooperatively with the Provost and Vice President Academic in support of the Faculty of Arts & Science and the University.

There are some additional responsibilities of the current Dean of Arts & Science's portfolio (chairing Undergraduate Academic Policy Committee and Nominating Committee) which still need to be discussed, and some additional responsibilities that might be assigned to each Dean (e.g., management of space).

Bearing in mind the strategic importance of expansion in Oshawa and the fact that the senior academic administrator at Trent in Oshawa will be collaborating with institutional partners in Oshawa (the University of Ontario Institute of Technology and Durham College), it is important that that position report directly to the Provost and Vice President Academic. The Committee is recommending that the position title be changed from "Associate Dean – Trent in Oshawa" to "Principal of Trent in Oshawa" to reflect the significant responsibilities for the running of a growing and an increasingly autonomous campus.

The Committee is recommending the introduction of a School of Graduate Studies, with the senior academic administrator being the Dean of the School of Graduate Studies. The Committee thought that graduate studies at Trent had reached a stage that warrants its recognition as an administrative unit. The members of the Committee suppose that the new Dean of the School of Graduate Studies and the new Provost and Vice President Academic will work towards fleshing out the implications of having a School of Graduate Studies. Minimally, the Committee imagines that eligible faculty could have status appointments to the School of Graduate Studies; that there would be university-wide policies and procedures governing all graduate programs (including future programs in Education and Nursing) that would be developed out of the School of Graduate Studies and approved through Senate; and that there might be more centralization of some procedures, as appropriate.

The Committee is recommending making the School of Education and Professional

Learning and the Trent-Fleming School of Nursing stand-alone administrative units, with the senior academic administrator of each School being a Dean. The Directors, the faculty members, the students, and the staff in each of these Schools currently face many frustrations and inefficiencies because the terms, the regulations, the admissions procedures, and the professional expectations of their programs do not align well with those within the Faculty of Arts & Science. Furthermore, each program has to meet Ministry requirements and professional accreditation standards. On many matters, the Directors have to consult directly with the Provost and Vice President Academic, and on some occasions, the Vice President Academic or the Dean of Arts & Science have to represent Trent at the provincial or Ministry levels because the Directors are deemed not to have sufficient authority. Recruiting candidates to the position of Director of the School of Education and Professional Learning or to the position of Director of the Trent-Fleming School of Nursing has been very difficult in the past, due in large part to the very anomalous placing of these Schools within the Faculty of Arts & Science, with their administrators reporting to the Dean of Arts & Science. On the recommended model, the Deans of these two professional Schools would have many of the same responsibilities as the Deans in the Faculty of Arts & Science, including budgetary responsibilities.

In Ontario, most Education programs are housed within a Faculty of Education and most Nursing programs are housed either within a Faculty of Nursing or a Faculty of Health Sciences (or similar). The one exception in Ontario appears to be Laurentian University, which has a Faculty of Professional Schools, within which both Education and Nursing are housed. The Committee heard from both Nursing and Education that they each favoured being stand-alone administrative units, and that they did not think there were enough similarities between their two programs to make a Faculty of Professional Programs a workable unit.

The Committee is not recommending any changes to the title or the reporting lines of the University Librarian.

The Committee is not recommending any changes to the title of Associate Dean – Undergraduate Studies, although it is recommending that this position ultimately report to the Associate Vice President Academic.

The Committee is recommending the introduction *in principle* of interdisciplinary schools. The Committee is not recommending the founding of any particular interdisciplinary school. Rather, it would like Senate approval for the idea of such a school(s), and it is proposing some criteria that might be met should some combination of departments or faculty wish to pursue this option. These criteria include: that it reflect one of the University's strategic priorities; that it provide capacity to enhance recruitment and retention (students and faculty), profiling, and fundraising opportunities; that it be department-less; that it be designed to address the genuinely interdisciplinary teaching and research needs of the relevant faculty and/or departments; that it require the union of one or more academic administrative units (departments/programs). Senate may wish to recommend that an Advisory Committee be established to determine the criteria for the introduction of an interdisciplinary school.

The Committee supposes that Directors of interdisciplinary schools would have many of the responsibilities of the Deans within the Faculty of Arts & Science, including budgetary responsibilities, and would report directly to the Provost and Vice President Academic. Any interdisciplinary School would remain within the Faculty of Arts & Science. The introduction of a new interdisciplinary School would have to be approved through Senate.

In September 2008, several temporary changes were made to the academic administrative structure at Trent. These included introducing a new portfolio: Vice President Research, International, and Strategic Enrolment Management. The position of Associate Vice President Research remained, but instead of reporting to the Vice President Academic, as it had until September 2008, it reported to the Vice President Research, International, and Strategic Enrolment Management. At the same time, the positions of Senior Director of Student Affairs, the Registrar, the Director of the Trent International Program, and the Head of Colleges and the College Heads (and all their reporting departments) were moved from reporting to the Vice President Academic to reporting to the Vice President Research, International, and Strategic Enrolment Management. In the spring of 2009, the title of the position of Senior Director of Student Affairs was changed on an interim basis to “Interim Associate Vice President Student Services”. At the same time, the Interim Associate Vice President Student Services was serving as Acting Registrar while a search (still ongoing) for a Registrar was launched.

The Committee recognizes the need to move this non-research set of portfolios back under the Provost and Vice President Academic, and it gave considerable thought to how this could best be done. The attached model and the following text outline the structure the Committee thinks is in the best interests of the University in the medium to long term. The Committee, however, is recommending that, for the 2010-11 academic year, the positions of Associate Dean – Undergraduate Studies, Interim Associate Vice President Student Services, the Registrar, the Director of the Trent International Program, and the Head of Colleges and the College Heads all report provisionally to the Provost and Vice President Academic.

The Committee recognizes the importance of ensuring that student support services are delivered in the most professional, efficacious, and coordinated fashion, and that all the activities designed to improve the learning and living experiences of our students are harmonized. It is therefore recommending the introduction of a new portfolio, Associate Vice President Academic, part of whose mandate would include ensuring that the in-classroom and out-of classroom experience of our students is as good as it can be and that those portfolios whose mandate is to provide the best experience for students are working in concert. The Committee anticipates that the new Provost and Vice President Academic may wish to develop the position profile and review the reporting relations of the portfolios under this position prior to conducting a search sometime in the 2010-11 academic year. From its vantage point, the Committee is recommending that once an Associate Vice President Academic is recruited, the positions of the Associate Dean – Undergraduate Studies, the Interim Associate Vice President Student Services, the

Registrar, the Director of the Trent International Program, and the Head of Colleges and the College Heads (and all their reporting departments) report through this new portfolio. It is recommending that at that time the title for the senior administrator charged with overseeing the Office of Student Affairs and all the reporting departments be “Assistant Vice President Student Affairs”, reporting through the Associate Vice President Academic.

The Committee is recommending that the position of Associate Vice President Research be phased out. The Committee understands that the President has recently announced that the position of Vice President Research, International, and Strategic Enrolment Management will be modified to “Vice President Research and International”, and that the portfolio will be reviewed in the 2010-11 academic year. The Committee therefore did not make any further recommendations to the research portfolios. The Committee thinks that a final decision on the reporting line for the Director of the Trent International Program may have to await the outcome of the planned review of the portfolio of the Vice President Research and International, but it recommends that for 2010-11 there be a dotted line report from the Director of the Trent International Program to the Vice President Research and International.

Although the Committee was not asked to estimate the costs of its recommended structure, the Committee has encountered considerable interest in this question. It is very difficult to calculate the costs exactly. And it is not possible to calculate the externalized costs and the lost opportunity costs of continuing with the *status quo*, with all the in-built structural weaknesses identified above. There was unanimity that the workload of the Dean of Arts & Science is too much for one person. The recommended structure is designed to redistribute the work in a way that addresses the needs identified through the consultations and by the Committee, with the minimum of additional costs.

The Committee has provided (included here as Appendix C) comparable data on the numbers of academic administrator positions at other Ontario universities and at other comparably sized Canadian universities. No research portfolios were included, and Associate or Assistant or Vice Dean positions were included only for those Faculties which offer the kinds of programs that Trent’s Faculty of Arts & Science offers. Given that these positions very seldom appear on organizational charts, the number of these positions is likely to have been underestimated. Just as Trent is under-administered relative to its sister institutions, the number of administrative support positions is also very low.

The recommended structure phases out the positions of Dean of Arts & Science, Associate Dean of Science, and Associate Vice President Research in favour of the positions of Dean of Science, Dean of Social Sciences, and Dean of Humanities. The Committee is recommending the introduction of one new position, the Associate Vice President Academic, and changes in title and reporting line to several other positions.

The members of the Committee expect that the majority of additional costs will arise from the need for additional administrative support for some of the reconfigured

positions. How much support is required will be a function of whether some or all of the administrative offices can be co-located, thereby permitting some administrative support positions to be shared. Even if the *status quo* were to be maintained, the members of the Committee anticipate that there would be the need for an Assistant to the Provost and Vice President Academic as well as some additional support for the Dean of Arts & Science starting July 1, 2010.

The Committee also notes that, were one or more of the Deans to teach (as the Directors of the School of Education and the School of Nursing and the Associate Deans currently do) and/or were one or more interdisciplinary schools to be introduced, there might be savings and/or efficiencies.

For the reasons cited above, the Committee is of the view that an investment into academic administrative positions and administrative support for these positions is required for Trent to be able to engage in the kind of strategic planning that will permit it to realize its preferred future.

The Committee is not recommending an implementation plan at this point. Nor does it think that all the approved changes need to be implemented immediately. It notes that several searches for academic administrator positions are currently underway, that several positions are being held in an “Acting” capacity, and that some of the portfolios are interim portfolios. The incumbents of these positions each have letters of appointment, which specify terms that do not all coincide. Fair and orderly implementation of these changes must be consistent with these commitments.

The Special Advisory Committee on Changing Academic Structures is pleased to present its report and recommendation. It would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Sally Chivers
James Conolly
Hugh Elton
Paul Healy
Christine McKinnon (chair)

Jackie Muldoon
James Neufeld
Jim Sutcliffe
Colin Taylor

February 23, 2010

APPENDIX A – MEMBERS OF SPECIAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Sally Chivers
James Conolly
Hugh Elton
Paul Healy
Christine McKinnon (chair)

Jackie Muldoon
James Neufeld
Jim Sutcliffe
Colin Taylor

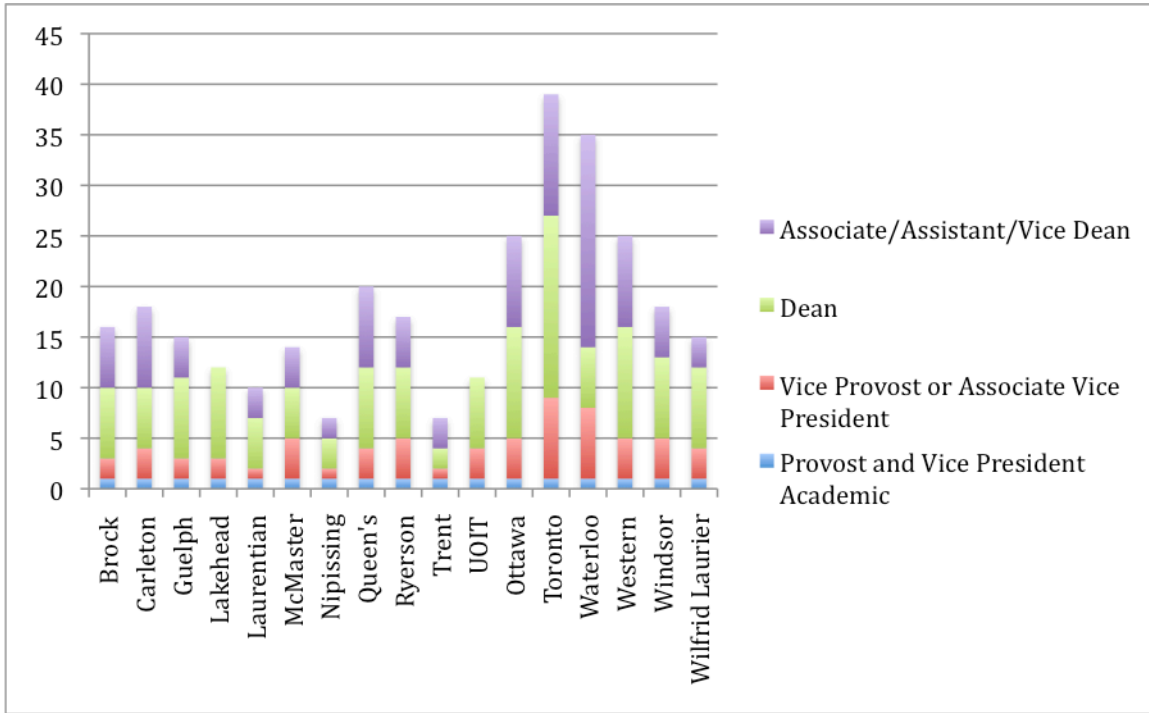
APPENDIX B – PHASE ONE CONSULTATIONS

Humanities Caucus
Professional Programs Caucus
Science Chairs
Social Sciences Caucus
Deans and Associate Deans
Extended Management
College Heads
Alumni Council
Trent in Oshawa
Librarians' Committee
VP/Dean's Office Staff
Graduate Studies Office Staff
Academic Planning & Budget
Graduate Studies Committee
Secretaries of Depts/Programs
Science Support Staff
Ancient History & Classics
Anthropology
Business Administration
Biology

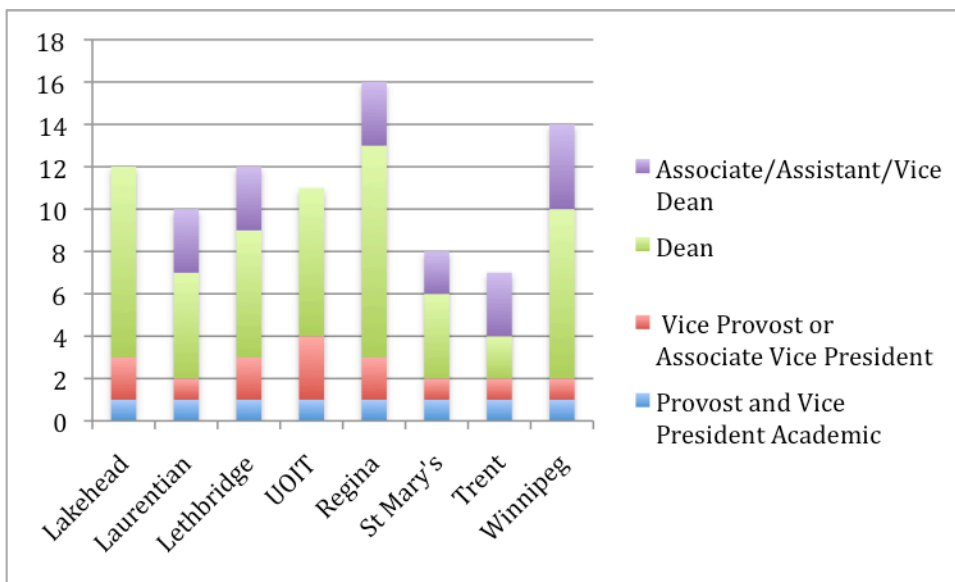
Canadian Studies
Chemistry
Cultural Studies
Economics
Education
English
ER Science/Studies
Forensics
Geography
History
IDST
Mathematics
Nursing
Philosophy
Physics & Astronomy
Politics
Psychology
Sociology
Women's Studies

APPENDIX C

Academic Administrator positions at Ontario universities:



Academic Administrator positions at comparably sized Canadian universities:



NOTES:

1. These charts represent Trent's academic administrative structure as of July 2009.
2. No Vice President Research or Associate Vice President Research positions included.
3. Associate/Assistant/Vice Dean positions included are only those in Faculties which offer programs offered at Trent.